POLITICAL LETTERS,

WRITTEN IN

MARCH AND APRIL

M.DCC.LXXXIV.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THESE Letters were not intended to be made public, they were written juſt at the time when Lord Temple's conduct on the Eaſt-India Bill was the ſubject of General Diſcuſſion. A very few copies were printed for the inſpection of particular Friends. But, having by ſome means got into the News-papers, and a very incorrect Copy being at length publiſhed, without the Authority or Knowledge of the Writer, he has intruſted the following Genuine Copy with Mr. STOCKDALE, for publication.

LETTERS, &c.

LETTER I.

THE late Reſolutions of the Houſe of Commons reſpecting *ſecret influence* have naturally drawn our attention to that ſubject, and have led us to conſider what *ſecret influence* really is, and what guards the law and conſtitution have placed againſt it. For, true it is, there is nothing more abhorrent from the nature of free government than *ſecret influence*; it has rendered thoſe Engliſh kings who have been guided by it, hateful as well as hoſtile to their people; inſomuch, that the very word *favoritiſm* comprehends national contempt and public hatred. The reigns that afford the ſtrongeſt proofs of its pernicious effects, are thoſe of Edward II. and the 2d Richard; of the former, Pierce Gaveſton was the firſt favorite. Him the Barons beheaded at Scar-

Scarborough. After him, the two Deſpenſers, father and ſon, got poſſeſſion of the king and government. Hu the father was, till this period, a man of an unblemiſhed reputation, and moderate, if not favorable towards the king. Hu the ſon attached himſelf to the barons. At an early period of his life he became famous for his eloquence, for the brilliancy of his parts, and the poignancy of his wit, with a ſpirit and vivacity which gave life and animation to his whole party. The parliament which met in 1319 at York, being wholly in the intereſt of the earl of Lancaſter and the Barons, obliged the king to appoint a miniſter of their own nomination; and to take the young Deſpenſer for his lord chamberlain (then the great confidential officer of the crown) becauſe, having taken many liberties with the king, ridiculed * *his* conduct, and inſulted his perſon, they ſuppoſed, his inſolencies could never be forgiven; but as ſoon as he had got poſſeſſion of his place, he thought to ſecure it better by courting the king's favor, than by remaining in the intereſt of his opponents, who had raiſed him. Thus, with his father he became joint miniſter; and their firſt care was to ſhut the king's ear againſt all counſels but their own: for which, however, when the Parliament met

* Vide Parl. Hiſt.

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in 1321, they were impeached and ſentenced to baniſhment. The 3d article runs in theſe words; *By their evil contrivance they would not ſuffer the great men of the realm, nor good counſellors to ſpeak with, or come near the king to adviſe him, nor the king to ſpeak with them, unleſs in their preſence and the hearing of one of them, and that too but when they pleaſed; thus uſurping Royal Power and Sovereignty over the perſon of the king, to the great diſhonor and peril of him, his crown, and kingdom* *.

The reign of the 2d Richard was conducted on the ſame principles, and had an end as tragic as that of the wretched monarch juſt ſpoken of. If I may apply a modern term to a fact of old date, I would deſcribe the cabinet of Richard II. as conſiſting of five perſons; the archbiſhop of York, the duke of Ireland, the earl of Suffolk, Treſilian chief juſtice, and Brembre one of the judges. This cabinet alſo aſſumed an excluſive right of adviſing the king, as appears from the 3d article of their impeachment, which ſays, *The ſaid traitors, by the af-*

* Hu Deſpenſer the father, created Earl of Wincheſter, was executed at the age of 90, with many circumſtances of barbarity, by order of Queen Iſabella, at Briſtol.—— Hu Deſpenſer the ſon, created Earl of Gloſter, was hanged at Hereford on a gibbet 50 feet high.

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ſent of Robert Treſilian the falſe juſtice, and Nicholas Brembre, by their falſe covin would not at all ſuffer the great perſons of the realm, nor the good ſubjects of the king, to ſpeak to, or approach the king, to give him wholeſome advice, nor the king to ſpeak to them, unleſs in the preſence and hearing of them the ſaid duke of Ireland, &c. or two of them, at their will and pleaſure, or about ſuch things as they thought fit, to the great diſgrace of the nobles and good counſellors of the king, and to the preventing of their good will and ſervice towards the king, thereby encroaching to themſelves the Royal Power, and a Lordſhip and Sovereignty over the perſon of the king, to the great diſhonor and peril of the king, his crown and realm. Theſe articles want no illuſtration; they ſhew not only the ſources of all the misfortunes that befell thoſe unhappy princes, but that the great criminality of their miniſters conſiſted in barring the throne from all acceſs of the ſubjects in general, and more particularly in ſhutting the door againſt the peers, when they went to give the king advice. For it matters not, whether the king delivers up himſelf to the will of his miniſters, or is over-awed by the miniſter's power;—*ſecret influence* reigns there, where no counſels are admitted but thoſe of a few ſelected perſons:—ſuch was the government in the hands of the Coali-

Coalition, which they mean to revive, if they can again force themſelves into office. This purpoſe was avowed on the 23d of December, in the debate on the reſolution moved by Mr. Baker.

The reſolution itſelf is ſo vague and indefinite, that no direct inference can be drawn from it—It reſts on the airy foundation of a rumor of a fact, without ſtating the fact itſelf* —It imputes a high crime and miſdemeanor, without naming the guilty perſon, but marks him to the public eye as plainly as if his name had been at full length; which ſurely is a proceeding of the moſt unfair, illiberal, and unworthy nature; for, if exculpation was thought neceſſary, the perſon aimed at muſt name himſelf, and thereby become his own accuſer, or ſubmit to the charge un-anſwered. But however dark the reſolution, Mr. Baker's doctrine is very clear; for, *there is* a *diſtinction* (he ſays) *betwixt Conſtitutional adviſers*, and *who are not*

* 23d Dec. 1783, Mr. Baker moved, "*That it is* NOW neceſſary to declare, that to report any opinion, or pretended opinion of his Majeſty upon any bill or other proceeding depending in either Houſe of Parliament, with a view to influence the votes of the members, is a HIGH CRIME and MISDEMEANOR, derogatory to the honor of the Crown, a breach of the fundamental privileges of Parliament, and ſubverſive of the Conſtitution.

ſo; it is dangerous for any individual to give the Crown advice, not being known, ſo that the ſmalleſt ſhare of reſponſibility does *not reſt* on ſuch *ſecret adviſers* *.

This doctrine was advanced, but expreſſed in ſtronger terms by the great leaders of the preſent majority, who are diſtinguiſhed by the name of *Coalition*. And, by this creed, the right to adviſe the crown belongs only to a *ſtate of reſponſibility*, in which none, but the oſtenſible miniſters are placed: all other, whether Peers or Commoners, who preſume to adviſe the crown, are called *ſecret*, *dangerous*, *unconſtitutional*; and, as long as the exiſtence of this Houſe of Commons laſts, or at leaſt its preſent temper, ſuch adviſers muſt expect all the cenſure and puniſhment their reſolutions can threaten and their power inflict.

Whether ſuch doctrines are well-founded, or whether the inſtitution of excluſive cabinets is warranted by this Conſtitution, may be the ſubject of another day's diſcuſſion.

* Vide Debates.

LETTER

LETTER II.

SIR,

IN the letter you received t'other day, we defined a government of *ſecret influence* to be *that*, in which public affairs are conducted by few perſons, without the interference of indifferent and impartial men, who, in modern language, are called * *unknown*, *ſecret*, and *irreſponſible adviſers*.

At this period, you may perhaps think it worth while to enquire, *when* ſuch excluſive *cabinets* as are now contended for, were firſt introduced, and whether they are founded on any principle of the Britiſh Conſtitution.—— The adminiſtrations of Edward and of Richard II. are already noticed.——The firſt avowed cabinet of later times was the cabal of Charles II. It conſiſted of the five confidential miniſters, beſides the King and the Duke of York—This whole council was not only in the intereſt, but in the *Pay* of Lewis XIV.; and, in union with that monarch, had concerted a plan for changing the religion and liberty of their

* See Mr. Baker's Speech, 23 Dec. 1783.

country to Popery and Deſpotiſm. The expedient of corrupting parliaments was firſt attempted by this cabal.——At the cloſe of the Long Parliament in 1678 this mode of government was ſuſpended. And in 1679, Charles II. in concert with Sir William Temple, formed the plan of a new privy-council, conſiſting of thirty perſons; and on their firſt appointment ſummoned every member to attend; to whom he made a long formal ſpeech, which was printed and circulated through the kingdom.—In that ſpeech the king acknowledged the error of having conducted his government by ſo *ſmall a number of his* privy-council—lamented the ill ſucceſs, and was (he ſaid) ſenſible of the ill poſture of his affairs from having taken that courſe, which had raiſed great jealouſies and great diſſatisfactions among his good ſubjects; and thereby left the crown and government in a condition too weak for thoſe dangers there was reaſon to fear, both at home and abroad.

In 1691, King William, on his going abroad, appointed a cabinet-council to aſſiſt the queen during his abſence; but that appointment was ſtrongly objected to in parliament, both as an innovation, and as a mode of government injurious

injurious to the public intereſt †: though we don't find that any formal queſtion was moved upon the ſubject.

In 1700, the Houſe of Commons reſolved to impeach the miniſters who had adviſed the partition-treaty. It ſeems, all the confidential ſervants of the crown had acquieſced in that meaſure; but the duke of Leeds, the earls of Pembroke, Jerſey and Marlborough, and ſecretary Vernon, pleaded, that they had not been conſulted in their reſponſible ſtation of privy-counſellors, (for the treaty, they ſaid, was never laid before the privy-council) but, as individuals.—And their plea was ſo far admitted, that impeachments were brought againſt thoſe four miniſters only (the earls of Portland and Oxford, the lords Halifax and Somers) who could be proved to have taken an active part in the negotiations.

On the 11th Jan. 1711, Lord Scarſdale moved a cenſure on the *cabinet-council* ‡ for having adviſed an offenſive war in Spain—But Lord Cowper informed the Houſe, that a *cabinet-council* was *unknown* to the law and conſtitution of England; on which, the word

† Tindal's Hiſtory. ‡ Parliamentary Debates.

cabinet-council was altered to *miniſters*; but the term *miniſters* was equally reprobated by the Lord Chancellor, by Lord Wharton and Lord Ilay (the great civilian of that day) as an expreſſion of uncertain ſignification, extending cenſure as far as rumor and fancy might carry it; deſignating many perſons, but naming no man ſo, as to enable him to repel the charge.—Oppoſition however had the majority, and carried their reſolution, illiberal and ambiguous as it was.

I know no other inſtances, from the Reſtoration to the acceſſion of the houſe of Brunſwick, when the conſtitutionality of cabinet-councils was made a topic of diſcuſſion.

George I. came hither, a ſtranger to the laws, language, conſtitution, and manners of the country.—He naturally threw the management of affairs into the hands of the Whigs, in which diſtinction we commprehend thoſe great and powerful families, who had been moſt inſtrumental in his advancement, and moſt oppoſite to the prerogative miniſters, who had governed the four laſt years of Queen Ann.—No prince in *his* ſituation could have conceived a predilecton more wiſe, more honorable, and more ſalutary to himſelf and to his

his ſubjects.—But, unfortunately, the favored principles of the laſt reign had taken deep root in the nation; an attachment to the houſe of Stuart ſtill remained, and, as a reaſon for ſtrengthening the hands of the new eſtabliſhment, the fears of Jacobitiſm were aggravated perhaps beyond any real danger.—The Parliament, that met after the Acceſſion, was to end on the expiration of three years. At that period, the rebellion of 1715 was but recently ſuppreſſed; freſh commotions were on foot in Scotland, and a ſpirit of diſaffection raged in many parts of England.——In this ſtate of things, and during this temper of the people, it was thought dangerous to hazard a general election; and the Parliament, which the people had choſen for three years only (on a ſpecious but un-real pretence, that triennial parliaments were troubleſome and expenſive) ſelf-elected itſelf for four years more, and made future parliaments ſeptennial.

I am not now going to impeach the rectitude of that ſtrong meaſure, nor enquire, whether the Conſtitution was mended or ſubverted by it; but you will allow me to aſſert, that it ſuſtained a very material alteration. That alteration is emphatically deſcribed in a celebrated pamphlet entitled, *Thoughts on the Cauſes of our preſent*

preſent Diſcontents. The elegant and ingenious writer ſays, *The virtue, ſpirit and eſſence of a Houſe of Commons conſiſts in its being the expreſs image of the feelings of the people: but* (he adds) *the unfrequency of elections has tended very much to draw the Houſe of Commons towards the character of a ſtanding ſenate.*

Within the walls then of this *ſtanding ſenate* in vain may we look for that mirror, which was wont to ſhew the *ſenſe and feelings of the people.* It is true, there are ſtill many faithful delegates, zealous advocates, and firm guardians of the public welfare in that aſſembly; but, in general, its *eſſence, virtue, ſpirit* are deſtroyed by the length of its duration. Independence of conſtituents, adherence to ſelf-intereſt, and gratification of ſelf-will, form the general character of a ſeptennial Houſe of Commons.

Sir Robert Walpole knew how to avail himſelf of this recent inſtitution of a *ſtanding ſenate*; *Every man in it* (he ſaid) *had his price.* In fact, he made as many purchaſes, as ſecured a permanent majority for all his meaſures; teaching his ſucceſſors in office, how eaſy it is to govern a *ſtanding ſenate* by the united powers of miniſterial influence and powerful connexions.

On the retirement of Sir Robert Walpole, the ſame ſyſtem was continued by the ſame connexions and the ſame means; but the ſucceeding miniſters not enjoying the perſonal regard of King George II. he made one effort to place Lord Cartaret at the head of affairs, but he failed; the Houſe of Commons refuſing to give their confidence to an un-tried miniſter, having ſo long and ſo ſecurely gathered the fruits of influence in the continuation of Sir Robert Walpole's ſyſtem.

His preſent Majeſty broke the chain. Once indeed he made uſe of lord Rockingham's party to remove Mr. Grenville; but they were ſoon diſmiſſed, leſt duration in power might render the force of thoſe great connexions once more irrefragable.

I may perhaps add in my next letter a comment or two on the ſubject of Influence and Connexions——In the mean time, I remain, &c.

LETTER III.

SIR,

SO few are the political writings that outlive the day and purpoſe for which they were publiſhed, that an author of eminent and uſeful talents ſeems to miſ-ſpend his time in devoting any part of it to ſuch periſhable topics. But, the pamphlet I mentioned in my laſt letter (Thoughts on the Cauſes of our Diſcontents) ought to be had in perpetual remembrance, or, if laid aſide, be brought back to immediate reviſal and full conſideration; not only for the ſingular ingenuity and elegance of the performance, but, becauſe it contains the Political Creed of that powerful connexion, whoſe weight in the laſt Parliament preponderated againſt the oppoſite ſcale of King, Lords, and People.—That connexion is now returning with conſiderable, though diminiſhed ſtrength, to the enſuing Parliament—You may therefore think it worth while to take a curſory view of the principles on which the party is embodied.

The Creed declares, That this country is beſt governed by Connexion *;

* Thoughts on the Cauſes of our Diſcontents, pag. 109 and 110.

That

That the Connexion is to conſiſt of men who are *bound together by common opinions, common affections, and common intereſts.*

That the *connexions* which predominated during the firſt ten years of Qu. Ann *, and the whole reign of King George II. †, are to be taken as models for the government of Great-Britain.

That the duration of Parliaments ought not to be ſhortened ‡.

That a *great official*, a *great profeſſional*, a *great naval* and *military intereſt*, *all neceſſarily comprehending many people of the firſt weight, ability, wealth*, and *ſpirit, has been gradually formed in this kingdom. It were better, perhaps, that they ſhould have a* CORRUPT *intereſt*

* In the moſt fortunate periods of our hiſtory this country was governed by a Connexion; I mean the great connexion of Whigs in the reign of Qu. Ann.—Id. 109.

† We ought, no leſs for the ſake of the Sovereign whom we love, than for our own, to hear arguments convincing indeed, before we depart from the maxims of that reign, i. e. of George IId.—Id. 26.

‡ I never remember to have talked on this ſubject with any man much converſant with public buſineſs, who conſidered *ſhort Parliaments* as a real improvement of the conſtitution.—Id. 96.

in the forms of the conſtitution, than that they ſhould have none at all *.

That *ſervitude* to ſuch an Houſe of Commons is perfect freedom †.

This creed was publiſhed in 1767, ſoon after the diſſolution of Lord Rockingham's adminiſtration; it was avowed by the *connexion*, and every man who did not ſubſcribe to its general tenets, deſired to quit the party ‡.

Mr. Burke, when he extols the reigns of Qu. Ann and of King George II. muſt allude to the particular events of thoſe glorious and ſucceſsful wars, which were conducted, at one period by the counſels of Mr. Pitt; and at the other, by the conduct as well as counſels of the great Duke of Marlborough.—On both thoſe periods we are to remark, that the exploits of war furniſh no rules for conſtitutional government in times of peace. But, not all

* Thoughts on Diſcontents, pag. 97 and 98.

† This *ſervitude* is to an Houſe of Commons (like obedience to the divine law) *perfect freedom*.—Id. 117.

‡ He who does not concur in theſe general principles on which the party is founded, ought from the beginning to have choſen ſome other more conformable to his own opinions.—Id. 114.

the

the triumphs of the Duke of Marlborough could render his adminiſtration popular; on the contrary, it was dreaded and deteſted, becauſe he affected to govern the Sovereign and the Country by *connexions*. Thoſe connexions aſſumed a power over the State and perſon of the Queen—She revolted againſt their ſyſtem, and to redeem herſelf from their dominion, appealed to her people againſt her miniſters; nor could all the greatneſs of the Duke of Marlborough, the integrity of Lord Godolphin, the virtue and abilities of Lord Sommers, nor the ſpirit of Lord Sunderland, ſupport that illuſtrious *connexion* againſt the inclinations of the ſovereign and the voice of the people.

In his eulogium on the government of George II. Mr. Burke has blended two points that are totally ſeparate from each other; viz. the adminiſtration as it was conducted by the *connexion of Whigs*, and that adminiſtration which was conducted by Mr. Pitt; he has engrafted on the one, a panegyric founded on merits of the other *; but ſo little praiſe can the *connexion of Whigs* derive from the mea-

* "He carried the glory, the power, the commerce "of England to an height unknown even of this renowned "nation in the times of its greateſt proſperity."—Thoughts on Cauſes of Diſcontents, p. 25.

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ſures of Mr. Pitt, that the end of our diſgraces and the commencement of our glory were owing to the *acceſſion* of the one and the *ſeceſſion* of the others from the management of affairs in 1757. A former war had been conducted unfortunately, and was cloſed inglorioufly by that connexion in 1748.—The war that was renewed in 1755, was moſt un-proſperous, while it lay in their hands: and all the part they took in Mr. Pitt's adminiſtration was, to execute his deſigns, and (if I may uſe Mr. Pitt's own expreſſion) to *lend him their majority in the Houſe of Commons.*

If this *connexion of Whigs* had no ſhare in the glory, ſtill leſs did they contribute to the perſonal happineſs of their ſovereign.—He wiſhed to place his government in other hands, but, the ſtrength of the connexion, and its powers ariſing from influence, compelled him ſtill to retain in office men whom he cordially deſpiſed and hated.—A ſituation more humiliating to his rank, and more galling to his feelings, did not ever prince endure.—Such were the obligations that George II. and his People owed to the great *connexion of Whigs.*

On the acceſſion of his preſent Majeſty, the firſt imputed object was, to break theſe *con-*

nexions.—Lord Bacon, in his Eſſay on Ambition * ſays; *It is counted by ſome a weakneſs to have favorites, but it is of all others the beſt remedy againſt ambitious great ones.* I don't know that the hint was taken from Lord Bacon, but the remedy was tried in the perſon of Lord Bute. The ſucceſs would have been more doubtful, if the *connexion* itſelf had not aſſiſted its operation. But Mr. Burke informs us †, *That under a forced coalition there rankled an incurable alienation and diſguſt between the parties that compoſed the adminiſtration.* ‡ The ground of which rancor was, (he adds) *That the power of the one* (Mr. Pitt) *aroſe from popularity, that of the other* (the duke of Newcaſtle) *from connexion.*——The connexion therefore joined the favorite of the king, in order to depreſs the *favorite of the people.* And, *the party ſeemed pleaſed to get rid of ſo oppreſſive a ſupport; not perceiving, that their own fall was prepared by his, and involved in it* ‖.

The alarm of a new reign of favoritiſm, and the apprehenſions of *ſecret influence*, were by this time fully entertained and extenſively promulgated. But the *connexion of Whigs*, it ſeems, had then no objection to that ſort of government, if Lord Bute would have accepted

* Bacon's Works, Eſſay 36. † Page 20.

‡ Ibid. ‖ Ibid.

their ſervices. That nobleman has long been ſo abſtracted from the world, that it is impoſſible to know his diſpoſition and line of conduct: but his lordſhip happily is now become the ſubject, if not of praiſe, as Lord North is, yet of juſtification, by the pen of an able writer, who has lately appeared for the Coalition party *.

In the pamphlet we ſo often quote, there is mention of a *faction* then pointed out by the appellation of *King's friends:* a *King's friend* is not now the object of popular diſlike; but there is a ſentence which ſhews the wonderful penetration of that enlightened writer—The miniſter, as he was the firſt in rank, was alſo the firſt in *proof* of being a *King's friend*, if gratitude could have made him ſo; for, during his long adminiſtration, he lived not only in the habits of confidence and favor, but with the accumulations of bounty continually flowing to himſelf, his family, his connexions and his friends. But during that lucrative intercourſe, we find this remarkable paſſage in the Thoughts on the Cauſes of our preſent Diſcontents—*May no ſtorm* (he ſays) *ever come, which will put the firmneſs of this attachment to the proof; and which, in the midſt of confuſions, and terrors,*

* Source of the Evil, p. 8.

and

and ſufferings, may demonſtrate the eternal difference between a true and ſevere friend to the monarchy, and a ſlippery ſycophant of the court.

Infido quantum ſcurræ diſtabit *amicus.*

If this verſe was meant as Prophecy in 1767, it became *Hiſtory* in 1783.

Your's, &c.

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LETTER IV.

SIR,

IN a former letter we ſuppoſed, that a government of *ſecret influence* exiſts in this country, whenever public affairs are conducted by a miniſter who has a cabinet-council at his devotion, and is ſupported in the Houſe of Commons by a majority, compoſed of men who ſhare the honors, employments, contracts, loans, and other advantages, which are in the power of a miniſter to beſtow.—Irreſponſibility and ſecrecy go hand in hand with ſuch adminiſtrations. In the reign of K. William, at an auſpicious æra, this ſyſtem was intended to have been cruſhed for ever; for, by the act of ſettlement, a proviſion was made to bring all public meaſures to be decided, not by a cabinet, but by the privy-council; and to make the counſellors reſponſible for the advice they gave. By that ſtatute it was enacted (12 K. W. 2 c.) *That from and after the time that the further limitation of this act ſhall take effect, all matters and things relating to the well governing of this kingdom, which are properly cogniſable in the privy-council by the laws and cuſtoms of this realm, ſhall be tranſacted there, and all reſolutions*

ſolutions taken thereupon ſhall be ſigned by ſuch of the privy-council as ſhall adviſe and conſent to the ſame.

This clauſe was indeed an effectual remedy againſt *ſecret adviſers and ſecret influence.* I always looked upon it as the very choiceſt and beſt part of the act of ſettlement (except what entails upon us the perſonal bleſſings of the houſe of Brunſwick); but it was repealed by the celebrated *connexion of Whigs*, 4 Ann, c. 8. —And as matters now ſtand, I don't ſee how miniſters are, either collectively or individually, reſponſible for the advice they give, or for the meaſures they purſue. Collectively, they are liable to no impeachment; for a charge muſt be ſpecified and brought home to the perſon charged, before he can be judicially proſecuted; and no one but a member of the cabinet can give information of what paſſes there.

The ſame reaſoning proves their irreſponſibility as individuals; for they are all bound alike to ſecrecy, and no mortal, but themſelves, can tell what advice each of them propounds.—If general blame is laid, the miniſters throw it on the particular department to which the tranſaction belongs; but the miniſter of that department retorts the accuſation back on the

cabinet at large. Such was the uniform practice during all the adminiſtration of Lord North.

The ſtation of a prime miniſter reſts on his having a cabinet, or at leaſt a majority, whom he can always command, and when he ceaſes to have that command, he ceaſes to be a miniſter.—When Lord Chatham came to be overruled in the cabinet, he retired from office; and afterwards declared in Parliament, *That he would bear no part in councils that he could not guide.*

The duke of Grafton (we have been told) brought Lord Rochford into the cabinet, as his *caſting voice*; but when his grace (infinitely to his praiſe and honor) propoſed a repeal of the Tea-duty in America, Lord Rochford gave his *caſting voice* againſt that wiſe and ſalutary meaſure, which would have prevented the American war. The duke of Grafton, being thus outnumbered in the cabinet, very properly reſigned his great employment at the head of the treaſury.

Lord Rockingham and Mr. Fox had each a majority when they formed their reſpective adminiſtrations; and that majority did not only inſure the performance of their meaſures, but

was

was a ground of their indemnity. A recent example may ſhew better than ſpeculation can, that miniſters in fact are *not*, but that other men *are*, in a ſtate of reſponſibility, for giving advice to the crown.—Lord North was the miniſter during the American war; but, for all the folly, treachery, and laviſhneſs with which that war was managed; for all the blood that was ſhed, and for that additional debt of 150 millions, which remains, to oppreſs individuals and to weigh down the State, Lord North, the adviſer and conductor, has been brought to no account: but Lord Temple, who is *no* miniſter, but who exerciſed the privilege of his birth-right as a peer, in adviſing the crown *once*, *has* been brought to account, *has* been arraigned, and (much worſe than openly) *has* been indirectly and ambiguouſly cenſured.

On that Privilege of Peerage you may perhaps hear a word from

Your's, &c.

LET-

LETTER V.

SIR,

IN the *Thoughts on the Cauſes of our Diſcontents* it is obſerved *, *That the method of governing by men of great natural intereſt, or acquired conſideration, was viewed in an invidious light by true lovers of abſolute monarchy.* The *true lover of abſolute monarchy* is, I conceive, a creature of the author's *fancy*—at leaſt, I never met with an Engliſhman who owned any ſuch affection. But that a *limited* monarchy has ſtill many true lovers, I hope and believe, and that they are no friends to the *method of governing by men of great intereſt, or acquired conſideration*; becauſe that *method of governing* is incompatible with monarchy. I alſo hope and believe, that ſuch men are utter enemies to *abſolute power*, by whatever perſons or whatever means it is ſought for.—True it is, that no ſurer *method to govern*, and to govern *abſolutely*, by men of great intereſt, can be adopted, than to debar the ſubject of his right of acceſs, and the peer of his right of audience of the crown. It was therefore conſiſtent with the policy of thoſe *great men*, who are combined for the purpoſe of taking government

* Page 14.

into

into their own hands, to contend for the excluſion of all advice, but what comes through the narrow channel of official miniſters. But, to deprive the ſubject of his deareſt rights, ſeems a ſtrange way of courting popularity, to which end Mr. Baker's motion on the 18th of December has a manifeſt and ſtrong tendency. On that day's debate Mr. Fox and Lord North pleaded their own cauſe with great ability, when they inſiſted, that *no man ought to give his Majeſty advice as to any meaſure depending in Parliament, but his miniſters*, (theſe were, I underſtand, Lord North's words); and Mr. Fox ſaid, that *with regard to a monopoly of the confidence of his ſovereign, if that was a crime, he was ready to plead guilty to the charge. Miniſters ought to monopolize the confidence of their ſovereign.*—So thought and ſo acted the miniſters of Edward II. and of the 2d Richard—But let it be remembered, that their *monopoly of the king's confidence* was by honeſt and independent Parliaments of thoſe times, held to be a grievous crime, and grievouſly did the *monopolizing miniſters* anſwer for it.

The mover of the reſolution on the 18th December referred to the Journals 16 Dec. 1641. The caſe was this: Whilſt a bill for im-

impreſſing of ſoldiers was in agitation, the King came, and made a ſpeech to both houſes of parliament, declaring, He would not paſs the bill unleſs there was a clauſe *to ſave the rights of the Crown* *.—This interference was very properly declared, by an unanimous vote of the Lords and of the Commons, an high breach of privilege; and they followed up their vote with a ſtrong and angry remonſtrance. But this precedent does not apply to the matter in queſtion. The King certainly has no right to appear in his legiſlative character, to publiſh his intention reſpecting any bill in parliament, till it is preſented for the royal aſſent.—He is not to pre-judge, or pre-determine, but as the third branch of legiſlature, reſerve his judgment till the act comes properly before him, and then give or refuſe his aſſent, as he thinks it for the welfare or detriment of his ſubjects. So it is with both houſes of Parliament; collectively neither of them has a right to meddle with the proceedings of the other; but individually every one has a common right to argue, diſcuſs, and ſpeak his thoughts, a peer to a commoner, and a commoner to a peer. Nor did the parliament of 1641, with all its ſeverities towards the king, ever enquire into his private converſations, nor endeavour to

* Ruſhworth.

ſtop

ſtop his freedom of diſcourſe, either with peers, or commoners, or other ordinary perſons.

And I am ſure, you will not differ with me in thinking, that an act of parliament is the very identical meaſure of which every man in the kingdom has a right to give his opinion, and concerning which the King ought moſt willingly to hear the ſentiments of his people. Acts of ſtate are the province of a miniſter, but the conſtitution and the laws are the buſineſs of every Briton.—We are all equally intereſted, becauſe equally affected by an act of parliament. It is therefore neceſſary, that the three branches of the legiſlature ſhould remain in a ſtate of perfect independence; for, dependence would cramp the exerciſe of that controll, which the conſtitution has intended, the one ſhould hold over the other. The Lords have a negative on every act of the Commons; the Commons of the Lords; and the Crown on both. But we have too many examples before us; the American war alone is a ſorrowful and ample proof, how decidedly the influence of a miniſter can operate on both our Houſes of Parliament.——There are times and occaſions, when that influence may carry, as far at leaſt as to the foot of the throne, any bill that iſſues from the cabinet, however ſub-

verſive of the people's rights, and however derogatory from the ſtate and independence of the ſovereign. To protect the ſubject againſt ſuch miniſterial violations, the conſtitution has placed a negative in the Crown.—'Tis a defenſive power, which may reſiſt any exorbitancy, or encroachments that may be attempted by the democratic or ariſtocratic parts of the legiſlature; like a citadel under the command of a brave and faithful governor, who may preſerve the city entruſted to his care, even though the leading men of that city, and a faction of its citizens, ſhould wiſh to deliver it into the hands of the invader.—But, if miniſters are to aſſume a monopoly of their ſovereign's confidence; if the King is to have no ears to hear, no eyes to ſee, nor tongue to ſpeak, but as his miniſter directs, then will this negative power, to all intents and purpoſes, be loſt; for how can the king be expected to act againſt the advice (however pernicious) of his miniſters, if none, but his miniſters, are ſuffered to adviſe him?—*Their* advice will never go to defeat their own meaſures.

Moſt cordially therefore do I wiſh and pray, that it may be found as agreeable to the temper, as it will be conſonant to the wiſdom and integrity of the new Parliament, to reſcind

thoſe

thoſe reſolutions that were moved by Mr. Baker, 18 Dec. 1783. For, to adviſe the crown in a matter depending in parliament, is an eſſential right of the ſubject; but, what ſubject will dare to exerciſe that right, as long as a deſpotic and unconſtitutional vote remains upon the Journals, which cenſures moſt ſeverely, and threatens with impeachment, every free and impartial adviſer?

A ſtill more important guard againſt ſecret and monopolizing influence is in the right of the Peer to adviſe the Crown; but that ſubject ſhall be reſerved to the next poſt.

I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

SIR,

THERE is no axiom in our conſtitution more generally known, or more clearly underſtood, than that the Peers are the *hereditary counſellors* of the crown, and that every peer has a right, when he pleaſes, to demand an audience of the King; Sir Edward Coke in his fourth Inſtitute ſtates this as an undoubted birthright of the peer: and you will find it recognized in the Commentaries of Sir William Blackſtone: * *In our law-books* (he ſays) *it is laid down, that Peers are created for two reaſons*; vid. *ad conſulendum*; *& ad defendendum regem*; *to adviſe the king, and to defend him: for which reaſon the law gives them freedom from arreſts, even when no parliament is ſitting; becauſe the law intends, that they are always aſſiſting the king with their counſel for the commonwealth.*—A peer, therefore, offering his advice to the crown, whenever public welfare or perſonal duty call upon him, does nothing more than fulfill the ſpecific condition on which the peerage was originally granted to him and to his family.

* Blackſtone, B. I. C. 5.

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The peer then having a right to adviſe the king, it follows of courſe, that the king has a right to conſult the peer. Eſſential to this mutual right is mutual freedom in the communication of each other's thoughts: it is abſurd to fix any idea of limitation to the diſcourſe; nor can there be an obligation to conceal it.—If the converſation be an honeſt one, and its end be to promote a good meaſure, or to defeat a bad one, there can be no ground of ſecrecy.

All privileges were inſtituted for the benefit of the people, and appertain to the community, as well as to the perſons who enjoy them. And, I am ſure, you will want no comment of mine to ſhew, that we all have a material intereſt in that privilege of peerage which we are now diſcuſſing. For, though every ſociety and every individual has a right to petition, and in that petition incloſe advice to, the throne, yet there is no common right of audience or free conference with the ſovereign.—*Our* claim is to preſent a dead letter, but the living voice is in the peer alone; to whoſe birth is annexed an hereditary ſeat in the legiſlature, an elevated rank, with high and great privileges, that exalt him above the ordinary level.

From this eminence he approaches the throne with ſteps that border upon equality; and, if he exerciſes his right to give advice, (which is not more his right than *duty*) with ſincerity and zeal, we cannot be inſenſible of our own participation in the advantage of it; for in every member of that illuſtrious body, every citizen may find a noble advocate to plead his cauſe in the preſence of his ſovereign.

Nor is it leſs the ſovereign's intereſt to keep open the free acceſs of men, whoſe ſituations carry authority and demand attention; from whom he may beſt learn the hopes or fears, the deſires or apprehenſions of his people.—If he has been falſely and injuriouſly repreſented, as the patron of violent and corrupt meaſures, or as an enemy to good ones, the independent peer will do his ſovereign juſtice, and ſet his people right in their conceptions of his will.—Above all things, a right of audience and free intercourſe with the crown is our beſt guard againſt *ſecret influence*, and that worſt of all monopolies, a *monopoly of the ſovereign's confidence.*

Our anceſtors impeached ſuch miniſters as *would not ſuffer the great men of the realm to come near the king to adviſe him, nor the king to ſpeak to them.* Now, it ſeems, this order of things

things is reverſed; and it is deemed an *high crime* and *miſdemeanor* for a peer to approach the king ſo as to adviſe him.

Having troubled you with many quotations from our own hiſtory, permit me to ſend an extract from the hiſtory of the Netherlands—By the antient and free conſtitution of the Netherlands, the nobles were as in England, *hereditary counſellors* of the ſtate; but, Philip II. on the opening of his plan of deſpotiſm, ordered the governeſs not to admit thoſe *hereditary counſellors* to deliberate on his meaſures; but confine herſelf to a cabinet, of which he appointed the members, and whom he afterwards employed, as the inſtruments of his tyranny. The earls of Egmont and Horne were, of all the nobles, the moſt diſtinguiſhed by their high birth, eminent wiſdom, and true patriotiſm. Egmont particularly had atchieved the moſt brilliant victories for his cruel and ungrateful maſter, and was accounted throughout Europe one of the beſt generals, and moſt accompliſhed ſtateſman of his time. Theſe great men aſſerted the privileges of their birthright, in adviſing the king to check the deſigns of that ambitious and dangerous miniſter, Cardinal Grandvelle. But Grandvelle, though he had not the audacity to arraign them in open ſenate,

ſenate, accuſed them privately to Philip, who got their heads ſtruck off in their native city of Bruſſels.—Thanks to God, we have no ſuch king as Philip II.; and thanks to our king, we have no ſuch miniſter as Cardinal Grandvelle.

I am, &c.

LETTER VII.

SIR,

IN the pamphlet which induced me to make politics the ſubject of our correſpondence, the author ſays, " He is no friend to Ariſtocracy, in the ſenſe at leaſt in which that word is uſually underſtood. And if the conſtitution muſt periſh, he would rather ſee it reſolved into any other form, than loſt in that auſtere and inſolent domination *."

On that kind of ariſtocracy to which this writer *may* be a friend, we may beſtow ſome future comment; but by the ariſtocracy which he deprecates, I preſume, is meant the peerage: he admits, however, *there are no fears from that quarter*. I perfectly agree with him; although there is a ſort of natural connexion between the two hereditary branches of the legiſlature, and although the crown has a certain fund of influence in the power of indefinite creations. —Was it not the firſt Tarquin of Rome who made an hundred ſenators at once to ſecure a majority? for theſe new ſenators were (Livy

* Thoughts on Cauſes of Diſcontents, p. 28.

tells us) *factio haud dubia regis, quippe ſua vi in ſenatum venerant* *. In England, we know that peers have been, and may again be, made to ſerve a temporary purpoſe; but ſtill there is no danger to our conſtitution from that quarter; for the crown having once created, cannot annull a peerage; and every addition to the number will eventually tend to increaſe the independency of the whole body.

The peers are moreover peculiarly intereſted in maintaining that equilibrium on which their own privileges and advantages all depend. For, whatever the other branches may gain, they are ſure to be loſers; if the Crown grows arbitrary, they will be enſlaved; if the Commons aſſume the executive power, we know by experience the peerage will be ſet aſide. The truth is, that the excluſive right of the Houſe of Commons to grant ſupplies throws an overbalance into that ſcale, and makes the peers, though ſuperior in ſtation, inferior in importance. And it is perhaps owing to a ſenſe of that inferiority, that we find, in general, ſo little activity in that aſſembly, though in many of its members we ſee the brighteſt talents and the warmeſt zeal for public welfare.

* B. I. C. 35.

In

In antient times, however, the barons reſiſted the crown, and to their reſiſtance we owe the liberty we now enjoy. At the Revolution the peers were the firſt who oppoſed King James II.; and the ſtandard of reſiſtance was firſt raiſed on that very bench of biſhops, whoſe pliancy has raiſed many a wiſh for a removal from their ſeats in parliament.

In the diſpoſition of the day to arraign the order of peerage, you will not grudge a little time in recollecting a few inſtances, wherein the conduct of the Lords has been contraſted to that of the Commons, as each have taken their part on the ſide of liberty or power.

In 1660, ſo devoted was the Houſe of Commons to monarchy, and ſo tranſported with its reſtoration, that when Sir Matthew Hale moved to lay ſome reſtrictions on the power of the crown, he could not find one member to ſecond him. And when we reflect on the temper and circumſtances of that period, we cannot but wonder that a total ſurrender of all liberty was not then made. The prevention of it was owing to the virtue of Lord Clarendon—Charles partook too much of the general feſtivity and joy, to trouble his head with buſineſs; he left all to his miniſter, who took no advan-

tage of the epidemic frenzy of the people in favor of the crown. His advice was, to repeal only ſuch acts of the long parliament, as had altered the legal conſtitution of government, and deprived the king of his juſt rights; he repealed not thoſe acts, which had aboliſhed the Star-chamber, the High-commiſſion Court, the Foreſt Laws, nor any other act that had taken away the exorbitant and uſeleſs powers of the crown. He revived all thoſe ſtatutes that were founded in good policy and beneficial to commerce, particularly the act of navigation. And, what was more meritorious in this great miniſter, he ſuppreſſed an intention in the Houſe of Commons to have given the king a vaſt revenue for life, ſuch as would have made him independent of parliament and the people. —When the king came to his recollection, he felt this denial of his miniſter as an irreparable injury to himſelf, and made Lord Clarendon the object, firſt of his hatred, and then of his perſecution.

On the earl's removal that cabinet was appointed, which we know by the name of the Cabal: the plan of this council was to render the Houſe of Commons, by its *duration*, independent of the people; and by emoluments, and grants, and penſions *dependent* on the crown.

This

This Parliament had ſat fifteen years, when a conteſt aroſe between the two houſes on the caſe of Sir John Fag and Dr. Shirly.—The latter had appealed to the Lords againſt a judgment of the court of Exchequer, which the Commons voted a breach of privilege, the defendant being a member of parliament, and committed the appellant, with all his counſel and agents, priſoners to the Tower. At length they came to a reſolution, that *no appeal from a court of equity was cogniſable by the lords.*—The right of appeal from the courts of Weſtminſter to the Houſe of Lords is one of the moſt diſtinguiſhed privileges of an Engliſhman; and in ſo irreproachable a manner has that judicature been conducted, that there are few inſtances, in which even the loſing party has not been ſatisfied of its juſtice. But, to make the Chancery the final judicature in all cauſes of property, the chancellor holding his office (as did all the judges before the Revolution) at the will of the crown, would eventually give the crown a dangerous and extenſive power over the property of the ſubject. The Houſe of Commons however in 1665 contended for inveſting the crown with that power, in violation of the rights they were intruſted to preſerve. To the firmneſs of the lords in ſupport of their own judicature, we owe the preſervation

ſervation of that right of appeal, which is ſo main a prop to the ſecurity and independence of all private property.

On this event an addreſs was moved by the Houſe of Lords for a diſſolution of parliament: it was loſt by two voices only, having been ſupported by thoſe peers who were moſt eminent for their love of liberty and regard to the conſtitution. In the Parliamentary Debates you find the arguments uſed by the lords, their proteſt, and an appeal to the people; in all which that queſtion is admirably diſcuſſed, how far long parliaments are conſiſtent with the rights of repreſentation? the lords inſiſted, that "*the eſſence of a Houſe of Commons conſiſted in its being the immediate choice of the people;—that frequency of election could alone realize that choice which length of time annihilated—that the members of this long parliament were become rather a court faction than the repreſentatives of the people, and had aſſumed all the properties of a* STANDING *ſenate.*"—But Charles II. (the worſt, for ſo he was, of all the Stuart race) knew how to prize this Houſe of Commons, for this very reaſon, becauſe they were alienated from their conſtituents, and becauſe he had tried with ſucceſs the powers of influence over many of the members; and becauſe he found that his influence

fluence was ſtill increaſed by the fear of a diſſolution, which was always in his power. In his ſpeech from the throne 5 June 1675, he therefore declared his diſlike of the behaviour of the lords, " *who* (he ſaid) *had raiſed diſputes with a malicious deſign to render the continuance of that parliament impracticable: and that he himſelf was very* un-willing to part *from ſuch friends.* But the vices of Charles came in aid of the conſtitution; for his pleaſures abſorbed his means of corruption: as the king grew poor, the members of parliament grew virtuous. After a ſervility of fifteen years, they became as refractory as they had been obſequious; and having adopted the excluſion bill and other offenſive propoſitions, they were at length diſſolved in the ſeventeenth year of their exiſtence.

Soon after the Revolution, the Tories came to have the chief ſway in the Houſe of Commons. King William indeed gave too much countenance to their principles, and too much ſupport to their leaders, till (unhappily for himſelf) he put his government in their hands: they impeached all his Whig miniſters; but the chief mark of their envy and proſecution was that great and excellent perſon Lord Sommers. The king had already taken the great ſeal from him; but, not ſatisfied with his diſmiſſion, they

proceeded to impeach, and immediately after impeaching him, addreſſed the king to ſtrike his name out of the liſt of privy-counſellors. Here the Lords interpoſed; they preſented a counter-addreſs, in which they remonſtrated againſt the barbarity of the Houſe of Commons, in putting a man on his trial by their own inſtitution, and then pre-judging and pre-condemning him by a vote of cenſure during the proceſs. The king gave no anſwer to either of the addreſſes, but, as he did *not* remove Lord Sommers from the council-board, he of conſequence paid no regard to that addreſs which was preſented by the Houſe of Commons. During theſe impeachments, the diſputes between the two houſes were carried on with great heat and aſperity; but dignity, humanity, juſtice, and perſeverance accompanied the Lords.

As the Lords took no part in the proſecution of the Kentiſh petition, I need not lengthen my narrative by a ſtatement of the arbitrary and inhuman proceedings of the Houſe of Commons on that memorable occurrence; till their violence made their diſſolution the univerſal wiſh and prayer of the people. King William found the ſucceeding parliament better affected, both to his own perſon and to the principles of the Revolution.

The

The caſe of Aſhby and White gave riſe to the diſputes between the two houſes in 1705. The matter was this—One Matthew Aſhby, a burgeſs of Ayleſbury, being *not* allowed to give his vote at the general election, brought his action againſt the returning officer, obtained a verdict, and recovered £5 damages; but on a motion for arreſt of judgment, three of the judges were of opinion, that an action did not lie in that caſe: Lord Chief Juſtice Holt, who tried the cauſe, alone ſupporting the verdict. Judgment was therefore given againſt the elector Aſhby; but the Houſe of Lords reverſed that judgment, eſtabliſhed the verdict; and of conſequence Aſhby obtained his damages and coſts of ſuit.

The law being thus decided, five other burgeſſes of Ayleſbury brought their actions againſt the ſame returning officer, who, it ſeems, had acted with great partiality.—The Houſe of Commons then interfered; they determined, that the cognizance of all elective rights whatever, both of the elector and elected, belonged ſolely to their juriſdiction.—They reſolved, that ſeeking redreſs at Common Law was a breach of privilege; and purſuant to this reſolution, they ſent the five injured electors to Newgate. The impriſoned electors ſued out

 their

their *habeas corpus*; but eleven of the judges were of opinion that they could not be ſet free, having been committed by an order of the Houſe of Commons, they were remanded back to Newgate. Lord Chief Juſtice Holt again ſtood forth the glorious, tho' ſingle advocate of liberty. Among other expreſſions, he ſaid, *That it highly concerned the people of England not to be bound by a declaration of the Houſe of Commons that was contrary to law.* The Houſe of Commons however proceeded to impriſon the counſel, attornies, agents, and friends of theſe electors, who had aſſiſted in endeavoring to procure their liberty. They even run the length of petitioning the Queen not to grant a writ of error, in caſe it had been demanded againſt the judgment of the eleven judges who refuſed to inforce the writ of Habeas Corpus. The Lords ſtemmed this torrent of lawleſs violence in the Houſe of Commons. I refer you to the reſolutions, remonſtrances, and other publications of the Lords on that event; they were drawn by Lord Sommers, and contain the genuine principles of true Whiggiſm—They aſſert, that although the right of the *elected* is only cognizable in the Houſe of Commons, yet the right of the *elector* being held by Common Law, muſt alſo be defended by Common Law—That the

Houſe

Houſe of Commons, though competent alone to decide upon the ſeat of its members, can make no reparation to an elector who is injured in his franchiſe—That by law he muſt ſeek for reparation; otherwiſe there would be a right without a remedy, which is no right at all.—Their lordſhips further reſolved, 'That every Engliſhman, who is impriſoned by any authority whatſoever, has an undoubted right, by his agents or friends, to apply for, and obtain a writ of Habeas Corpus, in order to procure his liberty by due courſe of law—That a writ of error is not a writ of grace, but of right, and the denial thereof is an obſtruction of juſtice, contrary to Magna Charta—And that every freeman of England, who apprehends himſelf to be injured, has a right to ſeek redreſs by an action at Common Law, and the proſecuting ſuch action is no breach of the privilege of Parliament.'

I ſhall trouble you with no references ſubſequent to the acceſſion of the houſe of Brunſwick.—What I have already ſtated is, merely in proof of the excellence of our conſtitution, by providing in each branch of the legiſlature checks and controls againſt the encroachments of the others, and to ſhew, how much we ought to be on our guard againſt all innova-

tion whatever; particularly, that we may not be led by the popular pretence of ſuppreſſing an Ariſtocracy, and by the ſtill more popular cry of exalting the Commons of England, be induced to form even a wiſh to lop off that branch from the legiſlative body, which has on many occaſions been found the ſtrongeſt defence of public liberty.

The ſubject of this letter will, I apprehend, throw me back ſo far as to ſtate the conduct of that Houſe of Commons, which defeated the arbitrary purpoſes of Charles I. in 1640.

I am, &c.

LETTER

LETTER VIII.

SIR,

IN my laſt letter I quoted inſtances, wherein the Lords reſiſted the arbitrary exertions of the Houſe of Commons. This recital has caſt me back on that æra, when the Houſe of Peers *ſubmitted* to the Houſe of Commons, and by that ſubmiſſion gave way to thoſe innovations, which firſt overturned the ſtate and crown, and afterwards brought on the ſubverſion of their own order.

In 1640 the memorable act paſſed, by which parliament could not be diſſolved or prorogued, but by act of parliament. The reaſons for this ſtatute were founded on the preſſure of the time. Two armies were in the heart of the kingdom, clamorous for pay, and ſubſiſted merely by the loans which were made on the credit of the Houſe of Commons. The king was not only deſtitute of means to ſupply the exigencies of the State, but wanted money for the ſuſtenance of his own family and houſhold. The citizens, who had furniſhed the laſt, and could alone provide future loans, diſavowed all confidence in the king and in his government, relying wholly

wholly on the faith of parliament; they therefore required, as ſecurity for their loans, that the duration of parliament ſhould depend, not on the will of the king, but on parliament itſelf. On this plea the bill was introduced, and under the impulſe of this neceſſity, the Lords agreed, and the King aſſented.

Thus, having their own perpetuity eſtabliſhed, and having the national purſe in their own hands, the Houſe of Commons became maſters of the State. And, could they have been ſatisfied with that degree of influence, which the conſtitution has veſted in the repreſentatives of the people, the memory of that parliament would have been honored throughout all ages beyond the moſt meritorious acts of all who had gone before them, in defending and ſecuring the rights and liberties of the ſubject.—They had reſiſted a profeſſed tyrant; they had aboliſhed ſhip-money, the Star-chamber and High-commiſſion Court, together with every claim and attribute of deſpotiſm in the crown.

But having once aſſumed, they proceeded to exerciſe all the powers of, an abſolute government, infinitely more cruel, more oppreſſive, and more humiliating than that which they had ſo recently ſubverted. Their firſt intruſion on the

the executive power appeared in an addreſs to the king *to remove Sir John Byron from the lieutenancy of the Tower*, to which they deſired the concurrence of the Lords. The Lords refuſed their conſent; becauſe (they ſaid) *Sir John Byron was a man of un-exceptionable character; and no ground of objection had been laid againſt him*—*But* (their Lordſhips added) *they were not competent to judge of the matter, the appointment of the lieutenancy of the Tower being* SOLELY *in the King*.

The Lords had already yielded too much to reſiſt with efficacy the power of the Commons.—On the refuſal to remove Sir John Byron at their command, they ordered General Skippon to ſurround and guard the Tower itſelf with forces in their own pay.—They proceeded to ſtation the Hothams at Hull, and to take poſſeſſion of all the forts and garriſons throughout the kingdom. Here the civil wars began.

With the military force under its command, and the national revenues at its diſpoſal, Parliament entertained no fears from any efforts that ſeemed likely to reſult from the forlorn and deſtitute ſituation of the king. But, in the ſpontaneous efforts of the nobility and gentry,

gentry, he found moſt wonderful reſources. At firſt ſight it appears un-accountable, why ſo many wiſe, virtuous, great, and opulent men would fly to the ſtandard of ſuch a monarch as Charles I. in reſiſtance to the Parliament of England; it was certainly no predilection to the cauſe of Charles I.; but a wretched neceſſity of ſeeking protection under his banner againſt the greater and worſe tyranny of the Houſe of Commons. Such a tyranny was never exerciſed nor ſubmitted to upon earth.—They began with appointing a court of Inquiſition, to which every magiſtrate and every officer who had ſerved the crown, either in a civil or military capacity, was made reſponſible for his paſt conduct. Neither the degree nor nature of any crime was aſcertained or ſpecified; but, in the general term of *Delinquency*, every man was comprehended, and ſubjected to ſevere puniſhment, whom the judges under that commiſſion pronounced *Delinquents*.

The Star-chamber, which could not be more arbitrary in its principle, was leſs oppreſſive in its judgments, and leſs terrible in apprehenſion, than this new tribunal erected by the Houſe of Commons.—But the oppreſſions of this Inquiſition were abſorbed in a ſubſequent ordinance *;

* 1647.

for

for committees were nominated by the Commons, and diſperſed all over the kingdom, to ſuppreſs what they called *Malignancy*. They had full powers to ſequeſter the eſtates, to fine, impriſon, and chaſtize the perſons of all whom they choſe to declare *Malignants*. A ſample of theſe committees having been brought on the ſtage *, are become to us a ſubject of laughter and ridicule; but, whilſt they exiſted in ſtrength and vigor, they ſpread univerſal horror and diſmay;—no age, ſex, condition, nor innocence itſelf, could find protection againſt the malice, vengeance, and avarice of theſe inquiſitors, but were all alike expoſed to, and ſuffered confiſcation of property, deprivation of liberty, and corporal puniſhments, in various but ſevere modes of infliction.—Private depredations could not, however, ſatisfy the perſonal wants of this Houſe of Commons. They had raiſed greater taxes on their conſtituents than were ever known under a regal government, and aſſumed the appropriation as well as the levying of public money; they were therefore careful to aboliſh the Exchequer and all eſtabliſhments for bringing the ſums voted by Parliament, and under their own management, to account. And we find in

* The Committee, or the faithful Iriſhman.

hiſtory, that they openly took £ 300,000 and ſhared it among their own members.—At the cloſe of the year 1648, it was determined to bring Charles I. to a trial. Few of the peers then remained in attendance on parliament; but thoſe few refuſed to imbrue their hands in the blood of their ſovereign; the Commons therefore voted them uſeleſs, and erected their High-court of Juſtice. I don't trouble you with any comment on the right to try the king by this judicature; for there is no arguing conſtitutionally upon extra-conſtitutional caſes; but when they proceeded afterwards to ſhed the blood of ſo many brave, virtuous, and noble perſons as were ſacrificed at the feet of this tribunal, without lawful judge, jury, or one circumſtance of legal proceſs, one cannot heſitate to pronounce, that the executions of their ſentences were all murders.—Still, had this very Houſe of Commons the aſſurance to call itſelf the *Repreſentative of the People*; and under that appellation the members gratified their own mercenary deſigns, and conducted every act of their atrocious deſpotiſm, which had laſted 12 years, when Cromwell, on the 20th April 1653, came in perſon to the Houſe of Commons, diſſolved it, and put an end to the tyranny.—I need not bring to your recollection, that this very Houſe of Commons,

when

when aſſembled in 1640, was compoſed of the wiſeſt, ableſt, and beſt men that ever graced the Parliament of England. — Their chief leaders were Mr. Pym and Mr. Hampden; men as worthy of truſt as ever ſat in parliament, whoſe names inſpire ſentiments of reſpect and veneration. When therefore you conſider what uſe was made of abſolute power by a Houſe of Commons ſo conſtituted, under the influence of ſuch men as Pym and Hampden, it is un-neceſſary to infer the propriety of keeping that aſſembly from encroaching on the rights of the other branches of the legiſlature; and from holding ſuch a tenure in their ſeats, as to diſſolve their connexion with, and render them independent on, the People.

I am ever yours.

LETTER IX.

SIR,

HAVING recited the proceedings that followed after the death of King Charles I. I leave you to moot, whether it is a bull or a paradox to ſay, that *ſervitude to an Houſe of Commons is perfect freedom*. And, having related what an uſurping and domineering Houſe of Commons *was*, let us now ſee what *is* the government of a *ſervile* one. This ſubject will lead us to compare the force of Prerogative on one hand, with the powers of Influence on the other. In a converſation on this point, I remember well, that you likened prerogative to an old elevated caſtle, ſituate on the confines of a land of liberty, on which the commanders made many an inroad and tried many an aſſault; but the ſpirit of liberty, the duties of reſiſtance, and the neceſſity of ſelf-defence had incited the inhabitants to repel the invaders, on whom examples had often been inflicted. But you compared a government of influence to ſome low fortreſs, intrenched in a rotten bog, irreſiſtible and inacceſſible, becauſe defended as it was raiſed, by the united ſtrength of executive and legiſlative power.

If

If abſtract propoſitions or written laws were of permanent efficacy, the Bill of Rights and the principles of the Revolution would have immortalized the conſtitution of Great-Britain; but at that very period, when the blighted ears of prerogative were trodden down, the ſeeds of influence were ſown. For then was the ſyſtem of raiſing ſupplies on public credit firſt promulgated; then were funds appointed for the ſecurity of loans and payment of intereſt on the national debt. Hence are derived thoſe innumerable ſources of clandeſtine influence, which have overſpread the kingdom, and created a patronage independent of the crown, and which, by accumulation in its progreſs, we ſee, has grown above it.

In our diſcuſſions on the topic of influence we ſhould keep as diſtinct and ſeparate ideas, that ſecret influence which the funds have thrown into the hands of the miniſter, and that open, viſible influence of the crown which has been co-eval with monarchy; and which the conſtitution implanted with a jealous hand; for conſtitutionally, the king is the fountain, and the only fountain of honors, and the ſole diſpoſer of offices, emoluments, and national rewards. And, whilſt un-impaired by partici-

pation, this influence was ſufficient, not indeed

to purchaſe majorities by the lump, but to obtain a certain acquieſcence in ſuch meaſures of government as were calculated for general welfare. It is true, that before the Revolution, kings were not wanting, who endeavored to ſet their prerogative above law, and who would, if they could, have made parliament the inſtrument to accompliſh their bad deſigns; but they were as conſtitutionally as ſucceſsfully, reſiſted. Oppoſitions led by faction, and ſtimulated by envy and ambition, were then unknown. But the diſpoſal of loans, lottery-tickets, ſubſcriptions, contracts, with the appointments of revenue-officers, have given the miniſter a power, that has enabled him to wreſt from the crown itſelf its juſt, honorable, and undoubted patronage. For now-a-days the miniſter does not heſitate to aſſume, if not a right, yet the exerciſe of a right, to fill all offices in church and ſtate, as he pleaſes; and even recommended to peerages whomſoever he thinks proper.

May we not go one ſtep further, to ſee with concern, that the crown itſelf is, in a great degree, dependent on the treaſury; for, with a revenue ſcarce adequate to the current expenditure, with a numerous and blooming family that demands a yearly increaſe of income, the crown

crown muſt neceſſarily require additional reſources, which his Majeſty cannot bring before parliament, but through the medium, nor obtain but through the influence, of his miniſter.

The Reform-bill, as propoſed by the Whig miniſtry in 1782, would have ſunk the crown to a low ebb indeed—but the want of penſions and employments for their own friends cut their plan ſhort. They extorted, however, the king's aſſent to an act, which both detracted from the ſplendor of his court, and galled his perſonal feelings, by the diſcharge of old and faithful ſervants, many of whom loſt their means when they were expelled the houſhold.—But, whilſt theſe miniſters were lopping off the branches of royal patronage, they took care to leave their own un-touched; for nothing was pretended to be done in diminution of miniſterial influence, except the Contractor's bill, which is a mere nullity *.

In

* One probable conſequence of transferring the patronage of the crown into the hands of the miniſter, may be deduced from the revolution that happened in France in 682. At that æra, the King's Miniſter, Charles Pepin, got himſelf appointed Mayor of the Palace, by the Nobles, independent of the King, with full power to fill all the offices of the ſtate, and all the emoluments of government, as he thought proper. From that period, the *King* himſelf

In the change of Prerogative for Influence it is remarkable, that avarice has ſupplanted ambition.—For to be graced by the favor of the ſovereign, to be diſtinguiſhed in the circles of a brilliant court, or to be honorably employed in the ſervice of the ſtate, were objects worthy the ambition of generous and noble natures; but to get loans, contracts, and ſubſcriptions is the purſuit of low, illiberal minds, who aim not at diſtinction, and feel no impulſe but for gain. Of ſuch an Houſe of Commons the poet has truly ſaid,

'Tis avarice all, ambition is no more. POPE.

himſelf became a cypher. The firſt Pepin was a perſon of great humanity, virtue, and moderation; he permitted the King ſtill to go to the aſſembly of the ſtates in his wonted ſtate, viz. in a chariot drawn by eight white oxen, and ſurrounded by his guards. He ſtill gave audience to foreign Ambaſſadors, and received homage from tributary princes: He paſſed his time at his country-palaces, where he was allowed a royal eſtabliſhment, with all the great officers of his houſhold, and a magnificent table; but he was never conſulted on the affairs of ſtate. The grandſon of Pepin found it convenient to diſmiſs this Pageant of a King, and to aſſume the name as well as Functions of Royalty, which he and his ſucceſſors enjoyed above three hundred years?

N. B. The Eaſt-India Bill, which was rejected by the Houſe of Lords, would have given the miniſter more power than the Mayors of the palace ever held in France. Mezeray.

Another

Another effect of this corrupt ſyſtem extends to the electors as well as the elected; for what a number of our repreſentatives does 'Change-alley furniſh; who compute what a ſeptennial ſervitude will repay; and then ſettle the price of their ſeats by the uſu-fruct of their voices! The electors on their part chooſe their members without perſonal acquaintance, or further enquiry into their character, than what relates to their fulfilling the corrupt bargain they have made with the borough.—This deſcription of modern repreſentation may appear too groſs, but is, I fear, too true.

In diſcuſſing this unpleaſant ſubject my memory always recurs to a paſſage of the Abbé Vertot's in his Revolutions of Rome—You are well acquainted with that author, and admire him—His ſtudies aimed at bringing to our view the ſeveral maxims, habits, ſyſtems, and events that have occaſioned the riſe and fall of ſtates in different ages and in different countries. He had no prejudices in favor of monarchical government. His reaſonings are drawn from facts, and his hiſtory affords moſt admirable leſſons in that courſe of philoſophy, which the citizens of free ſtates ought to learn, and their ſtateſmen ought to practiſe. He

 ſays,

ſays, that ' * *the government of an arbitrary prince does not reduce a ſtate to that point of certain ruin, which falls upon a republic, when its affairs are conducted by men who have no regard to the public intereſt. One advantage in a republic conſiſts in having its revenues better managed than in a monarchy; but if they are ill adminiſtered, the conſequences are worſe to a free than to a deſpotic ſtate. It is alſo an advantage to free ſtates, that there are no favorites; but, if inſtead of the friends and favorites of a prince, the revenues of the free ſtate are applied in making the private fortunes of ſome who direct the government, and of others who ſupport it, then is that free ſtate undone:* Actum eſt de republica. *By ſuch men the legiſlative power will be perverted, and the laws more dangerouſly eluded,*

* La tyrannie d'un prince ne met pas un etat plus près de ſa ruine, que l'indifference pour le bien public n'y met une republique. L'avantage d'un etat libre eſt, que les revenues y ſont mieux adminiſtrés : mais, quand cela n'eſt pas, plus mal.—L'avantage d'un etat libre eſt, qui n'y a point des favoris : mais, quand cela n'eſt pas, & qu'au lieu des amis et des parens du prince, il faut faire la fortune de tous ceux qui ont part au gouvernment, tout eſt perdu ; les loix ſont eludées plus dangereuſement qu'elles ne ſont violées par un prince, qui, etant toujours le plus grand citoyen de l'etat, a le plus d'interet à ſa conſervation.

than

than if they were openly violated by a ſovereign prince, who being always the firſt citizen of a ſtate, has the greateſt intereſt in its preſervation.'—This ingenious writer might have had the preſent ſtate of Great Britain in his eye. He might have ſeen her, after eſcaping all the ſtorms of prerogative, ſinking at laſt under the weight of thoſe taxes, which the miniſters of revenue have ſuggeſted, and parliament has impoſed. The learned Abbé would have imputed our ſituation partly to the in-attention, but much more to the corruption of the miniſters, who from the neceſſities of the public drew the means of private influence, and engaged the Houſe of Commons to a compliance with all their meaſures.

I admit, that ſuch an Houſe of Commons threatens no danger to perſonal liberty, nor to freedom of debate; nor to lay any reſtraint on the freedom of the preſs, nor on any kind of licentiouſneſs whatſoever. But perſonal liberty holds the ſecond place only in a free ſtate. Freedom in property is the primary conſideration. Perſonal afflictions lie in a narrow compaſs; the ſufferer knows their utmoſt extent; and fortitude will enable him, not only to bear, but to render himſelf ſuperior to them. But the want of protection in property is more

grievous and intolerable; it goes beyond the perſon to poſterity. Yet, what ſecurity in property does an Engliſhman poſſeſs, who is liable to all the defalcations, embarraſſments, and ſeizures that are conſequential to unlimited taxation? Its ſorrowful conſequences are already too viſible.—The higheſt ranks are ſenſibly affected; the middle ones are oppreſſed; and the lower ranks of people are impoveriſhed and dejected. What was the difference between a ſtout Engliſh workman and a French peaſant but this? that, in the liberality of wages here, an Engliſhman could afford to drink his beer, and in the evening's ſocial hour find the balm of his hard day's labor. His houſe of reſort furniſhed a news-paper; converſations formed his comment; and thus John Bull became a patriot, and a zealot not without knowledge, for the liberty and welfare of his country; for you are too well acquainted with human nature not to know, that the difference between the polite world and the vulgar lies in the mode of expreſſion, rather than in any diſparity of natural ſenſe and underſtanding.—But all ſuperfluities muſt be abandoned, as the neceſſaries of life grow dearer and dearer by taxation. The recreations of common life can no longer be enjoyed; but one ſad courſe of labor without indulgence will

will ſoon change and ſoon chill the native ſpirit and vigor of our countrymen.

Such are the effects of ſervitude to an Houſe of Commons.—Denmark was a free ſtate, till the Danes threw themſelves into the arms of deſpotiſm, for protection againſt the taxations of their ſenate. God forbid that ſuch a remedy ſhould be thought neceſſary, or if neceſſary, be tried in Great Britain. Her reſources are ſtill able to encounter, if not ſurmount, her difficulties. From what cauſes they aroſe, and how to prevent them hereafter, will be the ſubject of another letter, if I write again. All I propoſed now, was to combat ſo ſtrange a doctrine, as that *ſervitude to an Houſe of Commons was perfect freedom*. That ſervitude would, however, have been yoked upon our necks, if the Eaſt India bill, which was moved by our late miniſters, had paſſed into a law.—The greatneſs of external empire, the vaſt field of commerce, the inſtant poſſeſſion of enormous property, and the weight of patronage which the bill would have thrown into the miniſter's hands, muſt have eclipſed the crown, and rendered King, Lords, and People dependent on the miniſter. By diſſolving parliament, his Majeſty has applied that remedy which the conſtitution

conſtitution has preſcribed, and experience has proved effectual. For no king was ever yet diſappointed, that, to ſupport his juſt rights, threw himſelf upon the affections of his people.

I am, &c.

March 27, 1784.

LET-

LETTER X.

SIR, 21 April, 1784.

IN my laſt letter we quoted this aſſertion from the writings of the Abbé Vertot, 'That a free ſtate is nearer falling to ruin than a deſpotic one, if its revenues are in the hands of men, who apply them to private uſes without regard to the general good of the republic.' But this learned author does not deſcribe, perhaps he did not comprehend, what muſt be the condition of a free ſtate, if its legiſlature ſhould appropriate the revenues of future ages to the occaſions of the preſent time; that ruin, he might with truth have ſaid, can never fall on a deſpotic ſtate; becauſe an abſolute prince, on his own plea of neceſſity, may cancel debts which abſorb his revenues, fetter all his powers, and render him unable to defend himſelf, his country, and his people. But a free ſtate has no ſuch cure as the deſperate and heavy hand of deſpotiſm; for public debts, in a country governed by law, are ſecured as well as raiſed by law, which a limited monarch cannot diſpenſe with nor overturn.

It is a queſtion which I ſhould be glad to ſee anſwered by ſome great proficient in hiſtory, Whether the legiſlative powers of the free ſtates of antiquity did ever burden their poſterity with debts contracted for the ſervice of the time preſent?—In modern hiſtory, England and Holland will appear the victims of this fatal policy.—Holland ſuſtained her long wars with Spain, chiefly by money borrowed upon funds; by the ſame means ſhe ſupported herſelf againſt, firſt, the commonwealth of England, and afterwards againſt the united forces of Lewis XIV. and of Charles II.—When the prince of Orange was made Stadholder, the ſtate of the Seven Provinces was become almoſt a wreck. His firſt melancholy taſk was, (if I may borrow an elegant expreſſion from antiquity) *colligere naufragia reipublicæ.* But not all the inroads and devaſtations of Lewis XIV. nor all the long and bloody engagements with the fleets of England, left any conſequences ſo injurious to that ſtate as the public debt. On the acceſſion of King William, that pernicious ſyſtem was taken as an example, not to avoid but follow, in Great Britain: then were the funds inſtituted.—I am unwilling to believe that the ſervility, the dependence, and the corruptions of Parliament which flow from that ſource, were fore-ſeen at the time of the Revolution;

volution; but it was an object of that ſyſtem to embark a monied intereſt on the ſame bottom with the new-eſtabliſhed government. Debts and taxes ſoon became the cauſes of oppreſſion and the ground of heavy complaints, though, compared with recent expences, they appear trivial; for, after all thoſe great wars by ſea and land, in the reigns of K. William and Q. Ann, from 1688 to 1711, the debt contracted was little more than 50 millions. But there was a practice then introduced, which was cenſured at the time, and under which Great Britain will groan for ages to come. I mean an increaſe of the national expences beyond the ſupplies voted by parliament. The Duke of Marlborough's exceedings came to 5 millions, and were charged as navy-debt, to which they chiefly belonged; but there were included ſome remittances that had been made to the armies in Spain. For thoſe armies could only be ſupplied by ready money; of which there was none in the Exchequer; and in this dilemma the miniſters reſorted to the expedient of diſcounting navy-bills to ſupply the armies in Spain. Theſe matters were brought to a ſtrict enquiry in parliament. I refer you to an Addreſs moved on 31ſt of May 1711, and preſented to the queen, which was afterwards printed

and circulated thro' the kingdom *. In examining into the motives that guided the public men

* Extract from an Addreſs of the Houſe of Commons preſented to Queen Ann 31ſt May 1711.

" At the ſame time we have thought it our duty to enquire into the cauſes of the heavy debts we labour under, and to trace the ſource of that evil, as what, we thought would, in ſome degree, ſatisfy the minds of your people, and prevent the like miſchiefs for the future.

" In examining into the ſtate of the war, and looking back from the beginning of it, we find, that in ſeveral years the ſervice has been enlarged, and the charge of it increaſed beyond the bounds preſcribed, and the annual ſupplies granted by parliament. To this *new and illegal* practice we muſt, in great meaſure, aſcribe the riſe and growth of the heavy debts that lie upon the nation; nor does the conſequence of it end there: for we muſt alſo repreſent it to your Majeſty as a DANGEROUS INVASION OF THE RIGHTS OF PARLIAMENT. The Commons muſt ever aſſert it as their ſole and undoubted privilege to grant money, and to adjuſt and limit the proportions of it; and, when your Majeſty has recommended to them to conſider of ſupplies, and they have deliberated upon the ſeveral eſtimates for the annual ſervices, and conſidered and determined, what the nation is able to bear, their proceedings would be very vain and ineffectual, if, after all the reſpective ſums are ſtated, and granted, thoſe through whoſe hands the diſpoſition of them paſſes, are allowed in any meaſure to alter and enlarge them.

" This is an attempt, which very little differs from levying money without conſent of parliament, as will appear to

men of that period, you will diſtinguiſh betwixt the mere effuſions of party-rage, and the proper cenſures that were paſſed on the unconſtitutional exceſſes of miniſters. For, ſo clear was the integrity, and ſo perfect the accuracy of thoſe great men (the Duke of Marlborough and Lord Godolphin) that of all the millions ſpent in thoſe long and comprehenſive wars, there was not a ſhilling un-accounted for. Never were public accounts ſo fully examined, or ſo fully proved. But ſtill the *exceedings* beyond the grants of parliament were (as the Addreſs aſſerts) *illegal*. Comparing them with modern times, you will think it almoſt ridiculous to have complained of thoſe exceedings at all. They were comprized (as already mentioned) in a navy debt, which in 22 years had riſen to five millions †. The exceedings

to your Majeſty from this one conſideration; that a charge of that kind once incurred, and laid as a debt on the navy, or any other public office, is ſo far binding upon parliament, that, how little ſoever they approve of the means by which it was contracted, yet the public credit being pawned, the Commons cannot, without ruin of that, refuſe to provide for it."

† Before the year 1779, the exceedings in the navy, army, and ordnance amounted to 15 millions. From the year 1779 to 1782, the exceedings in the navy, army, and ordnance amounted to thirty-three millions, eight

ceedings during the American war, for the navy, army, and ordnance, beſides the ſums voted by parliament, amounted to FORTY-NINE MILLIONS. The unfunded debt in 1783 was £ 36,851,756, which make a ſum of 85 millions, expended, in theſe articles alone, by Lord North, on his own authority, without the knowledge or conſent of parliament. It may excite ſome wonder, when you compare the paſſive ſilence of theſe days with the cenſures paſſed on the Duke of Marlborough; but your ſurprize will ceaſe, when you reflect, that the Duke of Marlborough diſtributed no loans, no ſubſcriptions, no contracts, among the national guardians who ſat in Parliament.

I myſelf pretend to no accuracy in ſtating public accounts: but by the 11th Report of the commiſſioners it appears, that the national debt, as there ſpecified, was 238 millions; the intereſt on which is nine millions.—But there are ſubſequent accounts, which raiſe the debt to 252 millions; on which the intereſt to

hundred fifty-one thouſand, eight hundred pounds. The unfunded debt, in 1783, was £ 36,851,756. If you add nine millions, which Lord North obtained by votes of credit, and extra-expences in other articles beſides thoſe of the ordnance, navy, and army, Lord North's expenditures without any eſtimates laid before parliament, were not much leſs than an hundred millions.

be

be annually paid is ten millions, in addition to all the charges of the peace-eſtabliſhment.—A man muſt have ſomething ſanguine in his diſpoſition to form any hope of redemption from this ſtupendous burden. But, without talking the language of deſpondency, we may draw two certain concluſions;

Firſt, A ſinking fund muſt be eſtabliſhed to reduce this debt.

2dly, Care muſt be taken to prevent the augmentation of it. For if this debt is ſwelled beyond its preſent magnitude; I muſt again reſort to antiquity for an expreſſion to deſcribe the ſituation of Great Britain, *Deus, etiam ſi Deus voluit, ſervare rempublicam non poteſt.*

The commiſſioners of accounts, indeed, point out *the neceſſity of uniting the ableſt heads and the pureſt hearts that can be found in this country, to ſuggeſt ſome methods to reduce this enormous debt.*—Dr. Price, whoſe genius and whoſe induſtry enable him to fathom the depths of our reſources, proves the efficacy of a ſinking fund, if applied inviolably, with all the profits of compound intereſt, to the redemption

tion of public debts *. But the application muſt be without interruption; and he aſks, *how this can be ſecured, when experience has ſhewn, how little we can depend on the miniſters of the crown, or on thoſe repreſentatives, who ought to be the faithful guardians of the people!*

In contemplating theſe ſubjects, my memory always reverts to what I have read of the opinions of great philoſophers and of eminent ſtateſmen, who have applied their ſtudies to the relief of ſinking ſtates, and I think they all agree, that the beſt ſpecific for a diſordered government is to reſtore it to its firſt principles.

The queſtion therefore is, What are the firſt principles of the Engliſh conſtitution in the inſtance of levying money upon the people? And, how have theſe principles been violated?

It is the birth-right of an Engliſhman not to be taxed, but by repreſentatives of his own immediate choice. If this right had been attended to, all ſupplies demanded by government would have been raiſed within the year: for the conſtitutional method of voting ſup-

* On Public Credit and the National Debt.

plies

plies was this—The ſervice being announced from the throne, the Houſe of Commons decided, whether it was more prudent and more for the intereſt of the public and their conſtituents, to ſuſtain the expence or to ſtop the ſervice?—But this principle was violated, when the ſupplies ceaſed to be raiſed within the year, and to be thrown upon poſterity; for, when five millions were the ſum to be raiſed, and raiſed within the year, they who impoſed, ſuſtained the burden. The evil might be ſufficient for the day, but it expired with it; whereas, if five millions are raiſed by mortgage, they who grant it, charge themſelves with no more than the ſimple intereſt, which is but £250,000; whilſt they charge both principal and intereſt of five millions upon their children and their children's children. *We give and grant* is the language of money-bills; but it was meant to expreſs *the gift and grant* of *their* own property who made the offer, but not the property of poſterity *.

* The ſecurity that an Engliſhman formerly had againſt an abuſe of the power of taxation was this, That the Member of Parliament himſelf paid his proportionate ſhare of every tax that he conſented to impoſe; ſo that he could not injure the property of his electors without impairing his own. But this ſecurity has long been done away by the effects of Influence. And ſince Parliament became ſo great a part of the trade of Exchange-alley, we ſee how the fortunes of ſubſcribers to public loans are aggrandized by the very act of impoveriſhing their conſtituents.

This

This violation of the principles of the conſtitution will appear in yet ſtronger colors when you conſider, that the accumulation of the national debt has now brought the intereſt alone to ten millions, to be levied *every year within the year* on the inhabitants of Great-Britain.—But what had we to do in chooſing thoſe men who impoſed this exorbitant rent-charge upon us? *They* were the repreſentatives, ſome of the laſt, ſome of the *preſent* century, but not one of them elected by thoſe on whom the payment of theſe taxes falls.

It is an un-pleaſant theme to dwell upon—But the deviation from the principles of the conſtitution in levying taxes on poſterity, appears to me as a breach of the duty of a private man, of the citizen, and of the ſtateſman. For the duty of a private man (the pater-familias) is to protect, not injure the inheritance of his children; the duty of the citizen is to ſacrifice his perſonal and temporary intereſt to the permanent advantage and future welfare of his country; the difference betwixt a good and a bad ſtateſman conſiſts in this, that the one provides for the exigencies of the day, the other guards againſt events that may endanger public ſafety in times to come.

It is moreover a duty we owe our ſovereign, not to obſtruct his deſigns for the public good, and leaſt of all, to embarraſs him in the execution of his firſt and greateſt charge, that of defending and protecting his people. But this wretched ſyſtem of foreſtalling the national reſources is, if poſſible, more injurious to the ſtate of the king than of the ſubject; for, having the greateſt intereſt in the preſervation of the ſtate, he is moſt injured in having the means of defence taken out of his hands; and, under the weight of our preſent debt, how is the crown to undertake any meaſures, even of national defence, without heaping oppreſſions on the oppreſſed, and without ſtriking deeper at public credit, already wounded, perhaps beyond cure?

It is high time to recall your attention to the plan of relief, as pointed out by the operations of an effective SINKING FUND. But the learned author *, who enforces that meaſure, has no reliance on miniſters or on parliament for the completion of it. Where then is our hope? To me it ſeems, that our hope centers in the executive power alone; which can always bring back the conſtitution to its firſt

* Dr. Price.

principles in the levying and in the expenditure of public money. For as all requiſitions for ſupply are made by the ſervants of the crown, the crown can direct them to be made, not according to the forms only, but according to the true principles of the Britiſh conſtitution.—The crown may alſo reſtrain its miniſters from incurring expences beyond the grants of parliament. And above all things, the king has it in his power to appropriate the revenues of the ſinking fund, with all advantages and accumulations of ſimple and compound intereſt, to the reduction of the national debt. His majeſty may adopt it, as his ſyſtem of government, to keep that fund ſacred, and never apply its produce to any other purpoſe, on any pretence whatever.

Here you might interrupt me by aſking, Is the crown to ſtint its own ſervice, to check the operations, and to defeat the meaſures of government? To which I anſwer, That no advantages reſulting from war can compenſate an exceſs in the expence; and that no plea of neceſſity can juſtify the expenditure of public money in a manner that the conſtitution does not warrant.——What national good reſulted from the victories of the Duke of Marlborough? What legacy has the brilliant adminiſtration

niſtration of Lord Chatham left, but a debt of threeſcore millions? Why do we celebrate the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and why do we bleſs her memory? Only, becauſe ſhe entertained no expenſive projects of ambition, but in the midſt of preſſing difficulties, could refuſe the ſupplies which her people offered.—The ſame policy, at the ſame æra, endeared Henry IV. to the French nation, and has made his name more famous than his exploits in war.

I need not repeat an old aphoriſm, 'that to 'redeem a country is above all conqueſt.'—That happy and glorious conſummation is, I am ſure, in the heart, and, I think, in the power of our Sovereign. Great and important the object is, but it lies in a narrow compaſs: for, if the idea of *taxing poſterity* is abandoned; if miniſters are with-held from exceeding the annual grants of parliament; and if the ſinking fund is invariably applied to the reduction of the national debt, in a very few years we ſhall have a fair and open proſpect of the ſafety, ſtrength, and proſperity of Great Britain.

To lay the foundation, and to make ſome progreſs towards the completion of theſe great ends, a wiſe, virtuous, and independent Sovereign is fully competent.—That our gracious

King may, under Heaven, be the good inſtrument to procure eaſe, ſecurity, and happineſs for his people, is the fervent prayer of

His faithful Subject,

and your Friend.

P. S.

So many reflections occur on the practice of throwing taxes on poſterity, that I muſt trouble you with a further comment on this ſubject. How ſhort-ſighted does the policy now appear, when, to ſave the trouble of raiſing three or four millions *within the year*, at the beginning of King William's reign, we and thoſe who come after us, are doomed to raiſe *every year* ABOVE TEN MILLIONS *within the year*, to pay the intereſt of debts contracted ſince the Revolution.——Is it not ſtrange, that the miniſters of an enlightened nation, at an enlightened period, ſhould perſevere in a ſyſtem that inverts the order of things, counteracts every rule of good government, and is repugnant to every principle of that love and duty which a citizen owes his country?

In my next letter I will endeavour, with ſome degree of preciſion, to agitate this queſtion,

Whether

Whether any free ſtate can long ſupport its rank among nations, or be long exempt from total ruin, where the plan is, *To provide for the exigencies of the preſent time, by cutting off thoſe reſources which can alone maintain the ſtate in ſtrength and vigor, and on which it muſt depend for ſafety and defence, in times of danger, and for ages to come?*

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ADDRESS TO THE PUBLIC.

A new edition of SHAKSPEARE, and an edition of ſo ſingular a form as the preſent, in which all his plays are comprehended in one volume, will, perhaps, appear ſurpriſing to many readers; but, upon a little reflection, their ſurpriſe will, the Editor doubts not, be converted into approbation.

Much as SHAKSPEARE has been read of late years, and largely as the admiration and ſtudy of him have been extended, there is ſtill a numerous claſs of men to whom he is imperfectly known. Many of the middling and lower ranks of the inhabitants of this country are either not acquainted with him at all (excepting by name) or have only ſeen a few of his plays, which have accidently fallen in their way. It is to ſupply the wants of theſe perſons that the preſent edition is principally undertaken; and it cannot fail of becoming to them a perpetual ſource of entertainment and inſtruction. That they will derive the higheſt entertainment from it, no one can deny; for it does not require any extraordinary degree of knowledge or education to enter into the general ſpirit of SHAKSPEARE. The paſſions he deſcribes are the paſſions which are felt by every human being; and his wit and humour